

The space of the lady's bower is at the very heart of romance. It is in this emotional, most private of spaces that love, the main ingredient of the genre, finds its expression. This study will focus on the ways in which the bower is depicted in Middle English verse romances. It will concentrate on the typical romance topoi connected to this space, particularly in relation to the different facets of love as portrayed in the works of this genre. Inevitably, other related themes will be brought into the discussion; the role of the lady in romance is the most important of these. At the same time, the work will attempt to assess the place of the lady's bower in relation to the public, male sphere of the castle: the hall. Examples from Old English texts have been included in order to emphasize the contrast between Middle English romances and, in particular, to show the different contexts in which private space is to be found in the epic and romance genres. Rather than an exhaustive survey, it is selective in its scope, concentrating on a textual analysis of the romances in which both the typical scenes connected with the topic can be traced, together with those that are characteristic of the Middle English romances only. The work will focus in greater detail on two particular romances. The first of them, *King Horn*, is a romance inspired by legendary stories from the Viking era; the other, *Bevis of Hampton*, has its roots in the French tradition of the *chansons de geste*.